

COVID CONCERNS

With pandemic worsening in U.S., surgeon general worried

In this Thursday, July 15, 2021 file photo, Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy speaks during the daily briefing at the White House in Washington.

Associated Press
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With pandemic worsening in U.S., surgeon general worried

From Front

By JAY REEVES
Associated Press

The U.S. surgeon general said Sunday that he's concerned about what lies ahead with cases of COVID-19 increasing in every state, millions still unvaccinated and a highly contagious virus variant spreading rapidly.

Noting that nearly all coronavirus deaths now are among the tens of millions of people who haven't received shots, despite widespread vaccine availability, Dr. Vivek Murthy painted an unsettling picture of what the future could hold. "I am worried about what is to come because we are seeing increasing cases among the unvaccinated in particular. And while, if you are vaccinated, you are very well protected against hospitalization and death, unfortunately that is not true if you are not vaccinated," Murthy said on CNN's "State of the Union." U.S. cases of COVID-19 last week increased by 17,000 nationwide over a 14-day period for the first time since



In this Wednesday, July 7, 2021, file photo, people wait in line for COVID-19 vaccinations at an event at La Bonita market, a Hispanic grocery store, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

late fall, and an increase in death historically follows a spike in illness. Much of the worsening problem is being driven by the delta variant first identified in India, that has since hit the United Kingdom and other countries, said Murthy.

While U.S. case numbers and hospitalizations are still far below levels from the worst of the pandemic early this year, Murthy said the worsening situation shows the need to convince more people to get inoculations. "It is our fastest, most effective way out of this pandemic," he said.

About 186 million Ameri-

cans have received at least one shot, but another 90 million eligible Americans haven't. Officials are trying to overcome a refusal among some — particularly conservative, rural white people — to get vaccinated, but it's unclear how to do that. So, for the meantime at least, some places have reverted to health precautions that had been cast aside.

In Las Vegas, some resorts and casinos are again requiring employees to wear masks in response to a recommendation issued by health officials amid rising COVID-19 case rates in Ne-

vada; it ranks fifth among U.S. states for the most new cases per capita over the last two weeks.

Los Angeles County late Saturday reinstated rules requiring everyone to wear masks inside public buildings. Around San Francisco's Bay Area, which has some of the highest vaccination rates in California, health officials have recommended that everyone again wear masks inside public buildings, regardless of their vaccination status. But in conservative Alabama, where COVID-19 hospitalizations have more than doubled in a month and only about a third of the population is fully vaccinated, officials have refused to reinstitute statewide health rules or use gimmicks such as lotteries to boost immunizations.

"I think the best thing for us to do is just encourage everyone to use their common sense and practice personal responsibility and make themselves and their families safe," Gov. Kay Ivey told reporters last week.

Cases also are on the rise in

Springfield, Missouri, where Mayor Ken McClure told CBS-TV's "Face the Nation" that false information about the pandemic was hampering the fight to get people vaccinated.

"I think we are seeing a lot spread through social media as people are talking about fears which they have, health related fears, what it might do to them later on in their lives, what might be contained in the vaccinations," he said.

Murthy, the surgeon general, said "not nearly enough" progress was being made in the fight against misinformation spread through social media about COVID-19 and vaccines. Individuals, not just platforms such as Facebook, need to combat the problem, he said.

"Each of us has a decision that we make every time we post something on social media, and I'm asking people to pause and to see, is a source accurate? Is it coming from a scientifically credible authority? And if it's not, or if you're not sure, don't share," he said. □

Los Angeles hopes new mask mandate will reverse virus spike

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles County residents are again required to wear masks indoors regardless of their vaccination status — a new mandate starting this weekend that health officials hope will reverse the latest spikes in coronavirus cases, hospitalizations and deaths.

The rule went into effect late Saturday for the nation's largest county, home to 11 million people, where a sharp increase

in COVID-19 cases is led by the highly transmissible delta variant.

The vast majority of new cases are among unvaccinated people, LA County Supervisor Hilda Solis said Sunday.

"I'm not pleased that we have to go back to using the masks in this matter but, nonetheless, it's going to save lives. And right now that to me is what's most important," Solis said on ABC's "This Week."

California has seen a steady rise in virus cases since the state fully reopened its economy on June 15 and did away with capacity limits and social distancing.

San Francisco Bay Area health officials last week urged residents to again wear masks inside public buildings, offices or businesses regardless of whether they are vaccinated. The counties of San Francisco, Santa Clara,



In this July 1, 2021, file photo visitors wear masks as they walk in a shopping district in the Hollywood section of Los Angeles.

Associated Press

San Mateo, Marin, Alameda, Contra Costa and Sonoma and the city of

Berkeley stopped short of making face coverings a requirement. □

Senator: Bipartisan infrastructure bill loses IRS provision

WASHINGTON (AP) — A proposal to strengthen IRS enforcement to crack down on tax scofflaws and help fund a nearly \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure spending bill is officially off the table, Republican Sen. Rob Portman said Sunday. Portman, who is involved in negotiating the bill, cited “pushback” from fellow Republican lawmakers who dislike the idea of expanding the reach of the IRS, which they have accused over the years of unfairly targeting conservatives. He said another reason the IRS provision was shelved is that Democrats are including a more robust enforcement plan in a separate \$3.5 trillion infrastructure bill that they intend to pass through the Senate using special budget rules and without Republican votes. “That created quite a problem because the general agreement is that this is the bipartisan, negotiated infrastructure package and that we will stick with that,” the Ohio senator said on CNN’s “State of the Union.” Portman’s announcement that the IRS provision had been removed underscores the difficulty facing



President Joe Biden speaks with Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, and other bipartisan group of senators, Thursday June 24, 2021, outside the White House in Washington.

the bipartisan group of Republican and Democratic senators in finding mutually agreeable ways to pay for billions of dollars of new spending their White House-backed plan calls for. Portman said meetings were planned Sunday to discuss alternatives to the IRS provision, which had been estimated to bring in an estimated \$100 billion

over 10 years. The proposal to go after taxpayers who skip out on income taxes initially had potential bipartisan appeal, but outside groups came forward to lambaste it as a way to enable the IRS to snoop around Americans’ personal finances. IRS Commissioner Charles Rettig said at a congressional hearing in April that the national gap between fed-

eral taxes owed and actually collected is about \$1 trillion annually, more than double what official government estimates have previously indicated. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is pressuring lawmakers to reach agreement this week on the pair of massive domestic spending measures, signaling Democrats’ desire to push ahead aggressively

on President Joe Biden’s multitrillion-dollar agenda. Schumer, D-N.Y., said last week that he is scheduling a procedural vote for Wednesday to begin debate on the still-evolving bipartisan infrastructure bill. Senators from both parties, bargaining for weeks, have struggled to reach final agreement on a \$1 trillion package of highway, water systems and other public works projects.

Portman on Sunday called that an “arbitrary deadline” and one that was premature given that senators haven’t even agreed on details of the “complex” bill yet.

“We want to get it right. It’s not too much to ask that we have time to do that,” Portman said.

“We ought not to have an arbitrary deadline forcing this process.”

Schumer said he also wanted Democratic senators to reach agreement among themselves by Wednesday on the specific details of a separate 10-year budget blueprint that envisions \$3.5 trillion in spending for climate change, education, an expansion of Medicare and more. □

Associated Press

Court blocks order lifting CDC virus rules on cruise ships

By **CURT ANDERSON**
AP Legal Affairs Writer

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Pandemic restrictions on Florida-based cruise ships will remain in place after a federal appeals court temporarily blocked a previous ruling that sided with a Florida lawsuit challenging the regulations.

The one-paragraph decision by a three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals was filed at 11:50 p.m. Saturday, just minutes before a Tampa judge’s previous ruling on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention restrictions was set to take effect.

The judges’ issuance of a temporary stay keeps the CDC regulations regarding Florida-based cruise ships in place while the CDC appeals the June decision by

U.S. District Judge Steven Merryday.

The lawsuit, championed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, claims that the CDC’s multiple-step process to allow cruising from Florida is overly burdensome, harming both a multibillion-dollar industry that provides some 159,000 jobs and revenue collected by the state.

A spokeswoman for DeSantis did not immediately respond Sunday to an email and a text message seeking comment. In court filing, attorneys for Florida urged the 11th Circuit to reject the CDC request to keep its rules intact for now. “The equities overwhelmingly favor allowing the cruise industry to enjoy its first summer season in two years while this Court sorts out the CDC’s contentions

on appeal,” Florida’s lawyers argued.

The CDC, however, said keeping the rules in place would prevent future COVID-19 outbreaks on ships that are vulnerable to the spread of the virus because of their close quarters and frequent stops at foreign ports.

“The undisputed evidence shows that unregulated cruise ship operations would exacerbate the spread of COVID-19, and that the harm to the public that would result from such operations cannot be undone,” the CDC said in a court filing.

Then the CDC on Oct. 30 of last year imposed a four-phase conditional framework it said would allow the industry to gradually resume operations if certain thresholds were met. Those



The Disney Dream sails out of Port Canaveral, Fla. on a two night test sailing, also known as a simulation cruise, Saturday, July 17, 2021.

Associated Press

included virus mitigation procedures and a simulated cruise to test them before embarking regular passengers.

Merryday’s decision concluded that the CDC can’t enforce those rules for Florida-based ships and that

they should merely be considered nonbinding recommendations or guidelines. Several cruise lines have begun preliminary cruises under those guidelines, which the Tampa judge agreed with Florida are too onerous. □

Huge Oregon blaze grows as wildfires burn across western U.S.

Associated Press

BLY, Oregon (AP) — The largest wildfire in the U.S. torched more dry forest landscape in Oregon on Sunday, one of dozens of major blazes burning across the West as critically dangerous fire weather loomed in the coming days.

The destructive Bootleg Fire just north of the California border grew to more than 476 square miles (1,210 square kilometers), an area about the size of Los Angeles.

Erratic winds fed the blaze, creating dangerous conditions for firefighters, said John Flannigan, an operations section chief on the 2,000-person force battling the flames.

"Weather is really against us," he said. "It's going to be dry and air is going to be unstable."

Authorities expanded evacuations that now affect some 2,000 residents of a largely rural area of lakes and wildlife refuges. The blaze, which was 22% contained, has burned at least 67 homes and 100 outbuildings while threatening thousands more.

At the other end of the state, a fire in the mountains of northeast Oregon grew to more than 17 square miles (44 square kilometers) by Sunday.

The Elbow Creek Fire that started Thursday has prompted evacuations in several small, remote



Firefighters battle the Tamarack Fire in the Markleeville community of Alpine County, Calif., on Saturday, July 17, 2021.

Associated Press

communities around the Grande Ronde River about 30 miles (50 kilometers) southeast of Walla Walla, Washington. It was 10% contained.

Natural features of the area act like a funnel for wind, feeding the flames and making them unpredictable, officials said.

In California, a growing wildfire south of Lake Tahoe jumped a highway, prompting more evacuation orders, the closure of the Pacific Crest Trail and the cancellation of an extreme bike ride through the Sierra Nevada.

The Tamarack Fire, which was sparked by lightning

on July 4, had charred nearly 29 square miles (74 square kilometers) of dry brush and timber as of Sunday morning. The blaze was threatening Markleeville, a small town close to the California-Nevada state line. It has destroyed at least two structures, authorities said.

A notice posted Saturday on the 103-mile (165-kilometer) Death Ride's website said several communities in the area had been evacuated and ordered all bike riders to clear the area. The fire left thousands of bikers and spectators stranded in the small town and racing to get out.

Kelli Pennington and her

family were camping near the town Friday so her husband could participate in his ninth ride when they were told to leave. They had been watching smoke develop over the course of the day, but were caught off guard by the fire's quick spread.

"It happened so fast," Pennington said. "We left our tents, hammock and some foods, but we got most of our things, shoved our two kids in the car and left."

About 500 fire personnel were battling the flames Sunday, "focusing on preserving life and property with point protection of structures and putting in

containment lines where possible," the U.S. Forest Service said.

Meteorologists predicted critically dangerous fire weather with lightning possible through at least Monday in both California and southern Oregon.

"With the very dry fuels, any thunderstorm has the potential to ignite new fire starts," the National Weather Service in Sacramento, California, said on Twitter.

Extremely dry conditions and heat waves tied to climate change have swept the region, making wildfires harder to fight. Climate change has made the West much warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

Firefighters said in July they were facing conditions more typical of late summer or fall.

Northern California's Dixie Fire roared to new life Sunday, prompting new evacuation orders in rural communities near the Feather River Canyon. The wildfire, near the 2018 site of the deadliest U.S. blaze in recent memory, was 15% contained and covered 39 square miles. The fire is northeast of the town of Paradise, California, and survivors of that horrific fire that killed 85 people watched warily as the new blaze burned. □



Dead fish from red tide washed up along a St. Petersburg's waterfront park, on Thursday, July 9, 2021 at Bay Vista Park in St. Petersburg, Fla.

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Amid the stench of dead fish, protesters marched

Saturday along Florida's Tampa Bay to call for state assistance in dealing

Protesters seek help dealing with fish-killing red tide

with a growing outbreak of harmful red tide. More than 100 people took part in the event along the St. Petersburg waterfront carrying signs and shouting, "Save our bay, make polluters pay." Among other things, the protesters want Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis to declare a state of emergency that would free up more resources for the bay. The St. Petersburg City Council this week adopted a resolution calling for an emergency declaration. The governor's office has

said such a declaration is not necessary and that sufficient money is available for the outbreak from the state Department of Environmental Protection. "This is not political," Aimee Conlee, one of the event organizers, told the crowd. "This is life. This is water, and water is life."

Hundreds of tons of dead marine life has been removed from Tampa Bay in recent weeks because of red tide, a toxic algae bloom that occurs naturally in the Gulf of Mexico but is

worsened by the presence of nutrients such as nitrogen in the water.

Many experts say blame for Tampa Bay's unusually large outbreak rests with the old Piney Point phosphate operation in Manatee County. A leak earlier this year in a reservoir at Piney Point dumped more than 200 million gallons (757 million liters) of contaminated water into the bay. Nutrients that feed red tide can get into Tampa Bay and Gulf waters through other sources as well. □

Survivors recall escape, ponder future after Europe's floods

By ERIC FUX and
EMILY SCHULTHEIS
Associated Press

PEPINSTER, Belgium (AP) — Paul and Madeline Brasseur were at home with their two sons in the Belgian town of Pepinster when the water "came all of a sudden" late in the evening. It "was like a tsunami," the way it entered the house and kept rising instead of retreating, said Paul Brasseur, 42.

The family went upstairs and kept seeking safety during the night as the water climbed steadily below them. They ended up on the roof, watching.

"We started to see buildings collapsing, people on the rooftops, buildings collapsing, falling into the water," Brasseur said.

Eventually, making their way from rooftop to rooftop, they ended up perched on one with 15 other people, waiting hours for help to come. A boat arrived to rescue the children, but it began taking on water while a makeshift jetty started to collapse. Brasseur held his sons back. "We held out, for those nine hours," said Brasseur, who has lived in Pepinster since he was 10. "Then it was citizens, the father of my sons' best friend who came ... up over the rooftops and saved us, too."

More than 180 people in Belgium and Germany didn't survive the massive flooding that crashed



Wiel de Bie, 75, stands outside his flooded home in the town of Bommelen, Netherlands, Saturday, July 17, 2021.

through parts of Western Europe on Wednesday and Thursday. Thousands of those who did, like the Brasseurs, found their homes destroyed or badly battered. As the floodwaters subsided, attention turned to the gargantuan task of repairing the damage wrought by the storm-induced deluges — and to the immense losses faced by those in affected areas. In Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, in western Germany, Andreas Wachtveitel spent Saturday clearing debris out of his apartment building. The 39-year-old's home and office were submerged and badly damaged, so he doesn't know

what he'll do next.

"This was the worst thing that's ever happened to me," said Wachtveitel, who was covered in mud. "Thank God everybody in our house is still alive, but it was close."

The sounds of the water rushing into his building's lower floors and of nearby screaming haunt him, he said. Franco Romanelli, who owns the Pizzeria Roma in the same town, stood in front of the restaurant that was his livelihood as workers cleared ruined furniture.

"It took such a long time to build the restaurant to get it where it is," he said. "And now after the pandemic,

this is catastrophic."

"We are not talking about a few thousand euros" to repair the damage, he said. "I made a rough calculation; we are talking about a few hundred thousand euros to rebuild the place." Romanelli, originally from the Abruzzo region of Italy, came to Ahrweiler in 1979 when he was 15 years old. He said the extent of the damage in his adopted home is devastating.

"If I look at Ahrweiler now, I could cry," he said. "It's my home."

In the Netherlands, thousands of people who evacuated threatened areas on Thursday and Friday started to return home to survey

the damage on Saturday. In Bommelen, in the southern Netherlands, Wiel de Bie found his basement completely flooded. De Bie, 75, had carefully collected decades' worth of old magazines, photos and important documents. All of them were in his basement; what hasn't disappeared entirely is waterlogged and destroyed.

"Apart from the emotional value, which I find more important, magazines, radio bulletins from 1960 until 1997 all vanished," he said, picking up a dripping copy of a magazine from 1924 as he pumped water out of the basement.

Down the street, the Kant family's car still was partially underwater. A single rubber boot floated in their flooded garden. Professor Ijmert Kant, 62, said he was grateful for their safety. Still, he added, the task of cleaning up the debris and repairing their home was daunting.

"It's all material. Nothing happened. People were spared, and I mean that," Kan said. "But I'm not looking forward to the hassle of, 'How do you repair this? How does it work with insurance?'"

In Belgium, Brasseur celebrated his 42nd birthday on Saturday. The occasion may have turned out nothing like the day he expected, but the important thing was that his family was safe and together, he said. □

Hundreds of Jews visit contested holy site in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM (AP) — Hundreds of Jewish pilgrims visited a contested Jerusalem holy site under heavy police guard on Sunday, shortly after Muslim worshippers briefly clashed with Israeli security forces at the flashpoint shrine.

No injuries were reported, but the incident again raised tensions at the hilltop compound revered by Jews and Muslims. Heavy clashes at the site earlier this year helped spark an 11-day war between Israel and Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip. Jews revere the

site as the Temple Mount, where the biblical Temples once stood. It is the holiest site in Judaism. Today, it is home to the Al Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam. Tensions at the compound have frequently spilled over into violence over the years. The Jews were visiting to mark Tisha B'Av, a day of mourning and repentance when Jews reflect on the destruction of the First and Second Temples, key events in Jewish history. The Islamic Waqf, which administers the site, said that some 1,500 Jews

entered the compound — a number much higher than on typical days. It accused Israeli police of using heavy-handed tactics and said some visitors violated a long-standing status quo agreement barring Jews from praying at the site.

In a statement, the Waqf, the Islamic body that administers the site, accused Israel of "violating the sanctity" of the mosque by allowing "Jewish extremists to storm the mosque, make provocative tours and perform public prayers and rituals." □



Ultra-Orthodox Jewish men pray as others are sleeping during the mourning ritual of Tisha B'Av (Ninth of Av) fasting and a memorial day, commemorating the destruction of ancient Jerusalem temples, at the Western Wall, the holiest site where Jews can pray in the Old City of Jerusalem, Sunday, July 18, 2021.

Associated Press

OPEC, allies raise limits for 5 countries to end oil dispute

By JON GAMBRELL

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — OPEC and allied nations agreed Sunday to raise the production limits imposed on five countries next year and boost their production by 2 million barrels per day by the end of this year, ending a dispute that roiled oil markets.

The disagreement, sparked by a demand by the United Arab Emirates to increase its own production, temporarily upended an earlier meeting of the cartel. In a statement Sunday, the cartel announced that Iraq, Kuwait, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the UAE would see their limits rise.

"What bonds us together is way much beyond what you may imagine," Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said. "We differ here and there but we bond."

Prince Abdulaziz declined to elaborate on how they came to that consensus, saying it would see the cartel "lose our advantage of being mysterious and clever." But he clearly bristled at earlier reports on the dispute between Saudi Arabia, long the heavyweight of the Vienna-based cartel, and the UAE.

Prince Abdulaziz deferred at the beginning of a news conference afterward to al-Mazrouei in a sign of respect.

"The UAE is committed to this group and will always work with it and within this



In this Jan. 8, 2020 file photo, UAE Energy Minister Suhail al-Mazrouei attends the UAE Energy Forum 2020 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Associated Press

group to do our best to achieve the market balance and help everyone," al-Mazrouei said. He praised the deal as a "full agreement" among all the parties.

Outside of OPEC, however, tensions still remain between the neighboring nations. The UAE largely has withdrawn from the Saudi-led war in Yemen, while also diplomatically recognizing Israel. Saudi Arabia also has opened its doors to Qatar again after a yearslong boycott, though relations remain icy between Abu Dhabi and Doha. Saudi Arabia also has aggressively sought international business headquarters — something that

could affect the UAE's business hub Dubai.

Abu Dhabi's powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, the country's de facto ruler, and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have been close though over the years. The two leaders likely will meet Monday in Saudi Arabia.

Under the new production limits, the UAE would be able to produce up to 3.5 million barrels of crude oil a day beginning in May 2022. That's below the 3.8 million barrels a day it reportedly sought. Saudi Arabia's limit of 11 million barrels a day would rise to 11.5 million, as would Russia's. Iraq and Kuwait saw smaller increases.

In its statement, OPEC acknowledged oil prices continued to improve.

"Economic recovery continued in most parts of the world with the help of accelerating vaccination programs," the cartel said. Prince Abdulaziz also mentioned OPEC members Algeria and Nigeria had raised concerns about their production limits as well.

Oil prices collapsed amid the coronavirus pandemic as demand for jet fuel and gasoline dropped amid lockdowns across the globe, briefly seeing oil futures trade in the negatives. Demand since has rebounded as vaccines, while still distributed unequally across the globe,

reach arms in major world economies.

Benchmark Brent crude oil traded around \$73 a barrel Friday.

Once muscular enough to grind the U.S. to a halt with its 1970s oil embargo, OPEC needed non-members like Russia to push through a production cut in 2016 after prices crashed below \$30 a barrel amid rising American production. That agreement in 2016 gave birth to the so-called OPEC+, which joined the cartel in cutting production to help stimulate prices.

OPEC+ agreed in 2020 to cut a record 10 million barrels of crude a day from the market to boost prices. It's slowly added some 4.2 million barrels back over time. Beginning this August, the cartel said it separately will increase its production by 400,000 barrels a day each month through December — a total of 2 million barrels. The cartel then will assess plans on whether to phase out its current 5.8 million barrel of oil production cut by the end of 2022 as planned by the initial agreement.

OPEC member nations include Algeria, Angola, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Venezuela. Members of the so-called OPEC+ include Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, Sudan and South Sudan. □



Rescuers work on a flooded tunnel in Zhuhai city in south China's Guangdong province Friday, July 16, 2021.

Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Divers have been dispatched in the search for 14 workers miss-

ing since water flooded a tunnel under construction in southern China three

Divers join search for 14 people in flooded tunnel in China

days ago, authorities said Sunday. Zhang Yisheng, the vice mayor of Zhuhai city, told a news conference that the water level in the tunnel had dropped by 11.3 meters (37 feet), according to an online report by state broadcaster CCTV. Underwater robots, unmanned ships and sonar detectors would also be deployed, Zhang said.

Search teams have been slowly advancing into the tunnel as water is pumped

out. As of Sunday morning, they had gotten about 600 meters (650 yards) into the tunnel, a little more than half the 1.1-kilometer (1,200-yard) distance to where the workers were trapped. That is the length of the 1.8-kilometer expressway tunnel that has been dug so far.

Their advance has been slowed by carbon monoxide fumes from machinery being used in the tunnel as part of the operation,

though the level of the potential deadly gas has been lowered by improving ventilation.

The flood happened about 3:30 a.m. Thursday. An abnormal noise was heard and bits of material started falling off on one side of the two-tube tunnel. An evacuation was ordered. Water rushed in and flowed through a connection into the other tube of the tunnel, trapping 14 workers on that side. □



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Haiti faces uncertain future as mourning first lady returns

By **DÁNICA COTO**

Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)

— Haiti's political future on Sunday grew murkier after the surprise return of first lady Martine Moïse, who was released from a hospital in Miami where she was treated for injuries following an attack in which the president was assassinated. Martine Moïse did not make any public statements after she descended a private jet wearing a black dress, a black bulletproof vest, a black face mask and her right arm in a black sling as she mourned for President Jovenel Moïse, who was killed July 7 at their private home. Some experts — like many in this country of more than 11 million people — were surprised at how quickly she reappeared in Haiti and questioned whether she plans to become involved in the country's politics.

"The fact that she returned could suggest she intends to play some role," said Laurent Dubois, a Haiti ex-

pert and Duke University professor. "She may intervene in one way or another." Martine Moïse arrived just hours after a prominent group of international diplomats issued a statement that appeared to shun interim Prime Minister Claude Joseph, the man currently running the country with the backing of police and the military.

Joseph's name was never mentioned in the statement made by the Core Group, composed of ambassadors from Germany, Brazil, Canada, Spain, the U.S., France, the European Union and representatives from the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

The group called for the creation of "a consensual and inclusive government," adding, "To this end, it strongly encourages the designated Prime Minister Ariel Henry to continue the mission entrusted to him to form such a government." Henry was designated prime minister a day before

Jovenel Moïse was killed. He did not respond to requests for comment.

The U.N., OAS and U.S. State Department did not offer further explanation when contacted.

Given the current state of Haitian politics, Dubois said he believes the arrival of Martine Moïse could have an impact.

"She's obviously in a position to play a role ... given how wide open things are," he said, adding that the Core Group's statement is striking because it makes no reference to Joseph. "One has to wonder whether the developments in the investigation have anything to do with this. They're all these puzzle pieces that are just changing moment to moment. Right now it seems very hard to figure out how to put these together."

Authorities in Haiti and Colombia say at least 18 suspects directly linked to the killing have been arrested, the majority of them former Colombian soldiers. At least three suspects were



In this handout photo released by Haiti's Secretary of State for Communication, Haiti's first lady Martine Moïse, wearing a bullet proof vest and her right arm in a sling, arrives at the Toussaint Louverture International Airport, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Saturday, July 17, 2021.

Associated Press

killed and police say they are looking for numerous others. Colombian officials have said that the majority of former soldiers were duped and did not know of the assassination plot. Police in Haiti on Sunday identified another suspect in the case: Pierre Joseph

Ashkard. Online records show he is a Canadian-based businessman who runs a medical business in Texas with Christian Emmanuel Sanon, a Haitian physician and pastor whom local authorities recently arrested and consider a key suspect. □



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, on a visit to Soweto, South Africa, Sunday July 18, 2021.

Associated Press

By **ANDREW MELDRUM**

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP)

— South Africa's leader went to Johannesburg's Soweto township Sunday to view badly damaged shop-

ping centers where people were trampled to death in rioting sparked by the imprisonment of former President Jacob Zuma.

President Cyril Ramaphosa toured the Ndofaya Mall in

South Africa's leader vows to restore order, catch plotters

the Meadowlands part of Soweto, where at least 10 people died in the ransacking. South Africa's unrest erupted earlier this month when Zuma began serving a 15-month sentence for contempt of court. He had defied a court order to testify at a state-backed inquiry investigating allegations of corruption while he was president from 2009 to 2018. The protests quickly escalated to a weeklong spree of violence, South Africa's worst rioting since the country achieved majority rule democracy in 1994. The unrest hit the KwaZulu-

Natal province, which is Zuma's home area, and Gauteng, South Africa's most populous province, which includes Johannesburg, the country's largest city. Trucks were burned, strategic highways blocked and thousands of rioters ransacked malls and shopping centers in the two provinces.

In the eastern port of Durban, rioters attacked industrial areas, where they emptied warehouses and factories and arsonists set them alight.

At least 212 people died in the unrest, many trampled

to death when shops were looted, said police. More than 2,500 people have been arrested for theft and vandalism.

Looking at the shattered glass entrance to a cellphone shop Sunday in Soweto, Ramaphosa was told several people died there.

"We are all really concerned about what happened here," Ramaphosa said. "But we are also saying we have learned valuable lessons. The most important lesson is, in the end, that we must tighten up our security forces." □

MedCare's Fit2Fly COVID-19 Testing Center Visit our newest Location on Palm Beach!

PALM BEACH — MedCare's Fit2Fly COVID-19 Testing Center just opened a third walk-in location on Palm Beach at Budget Car Rental next to Soprano's Piano Bar. The other two locations are at the Cove Mall and near the Courtyard by Marriott Aruba Resort at the Mill.

All three fit2fly test centers offer your best option for the post vacation COVID-19 test which has been a requirement since January 26th 2021 by the U.S. before returning home. All passengers going to the United States, including U.S. citizens, are required to have a negative (antigen or PCR) COVID-19 test result of a test taken maximum three days prior to boarding the flight, or documentation of recovery from COVID-19. MedCare's testing centers in and close to the hotels provide you with an easy and secure solution.

MedCare Clinic, a high-quality medical clinic that is specialized in urgent care for tourists and that has been appointed as the national COVID-19 clinic for tourists, and Laboratorio di Servizio, a full-service modern medical laboratory with state-of-the-art equipment, have partnered up to provide fast and reliable COVID-19 testing to all. Laboratorio di Servizio is ISO-15189:2012 accredited by the Dutch Council for Accreditation (M317).

Rapid PCR

As Aruba resumes to receive more and more visitors each month, one thing has become very clear: testing is critical. Thus far MedCare Clinic has been offering high-volume laboratory testing with results in 24 hours or less. The newest service on the market is Rapid PCR, where you receive your results in minutes not hours.

Just steps away from you

The Fit2Fly COVID-19 Testing Centers are located at the Cove Mall, near the Courtyard by Marriott Aruba Resort at the Mill, and now also at Budget car rental next to Soprano's Piano Bar. These three locations at a stone's throw from your resort, condominium, or other vacation accommodation. Walk-ins are welcome. It is recommended that the tests are done timely, as the negative test is only accepted if taken up to three days before boarding your flight. MedCare Fit2Fly Testing Center at the Cove Mall is opposite the Holiday Inn and is open every day for walk-ins from 8 AM through 10 PM. MedCare's other location is situated at The Courtyard Aruba Resort, is across the street from the RIU Hotel and is open every day from 8:30 AM until 2 PM. The Newest location at Budget Car Rental next to Soprano's Piano Bar is open daily from 5 PM to 9 PM.



At your hotel

For a selection of hotels/resorts in Aruba, MedCare has setup Testing Centers on site. The hotels/resorts at which we have a testing site are: Divi All Inclusive, Divi Dutch Village, Divi Golf, Divi Phoenix, Divi Tamarijn, Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort, Hyatt Regency, Renaissance, and the Ritz-Carlton Resort. Please contact your front desk for more information on our Testing Centers at these properties.

Costs and timing

Passengers must be tested with a viral test that could be either an Antigen Test or a nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT), such as the reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (PCR). The price for the Antigen Test is only \$50, and the PCR Test is available, for \$125. The new rapid PCR will be \$150 (results in 30 minutes.) MedCare offers the easier and substantially cheaper Antigen Test that is acceptable for travel to the U.S. as per the CDC guidelines. Pre-travel testing is not covered by the Aruban visitor insurance. Please contact your insurance company to verify if testing costs are insured. Results are e-mailed to you within 24 hours of testing.

Private bookings

For your convenience, Medcare also offers private testing at your accommodation/hotel room for a one-time service fee of \$120. This fee covers testing up to 10 people (one appointment, at one location and a specific time). Additional persons will be charged \$10 per person. □

For more information, please contact:

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Harbour House Aruba officially open! 80 % sold, construction in final phase: Harbour House Aruba is ready for you!

ORANJESTAD — It was the official Grand Opening of Harbour House Aruba last Thursday, June 10th. The residence consisting of 94 units is located in the former Mar Azul building, right in the heart of Oranjestad. The two brothers Irwin J. Perret-Gentil and Alberto Perret-Gentil from PERING, one of the largest, privately-owned Real Estate and construction firms in Venezuela and Aruba, officially opened their new jewel in the presence of the invitees.

Harbour House Aruba is the ultimate smart investment or personal living space. A state-of-the-art lobby, an ocean-view gym, bar service, rooftop with 360 degrees view of Oranjestad, on-site parking, 24-hours security and a top floor lounge area with Jacuzzi's. Cherry on the cake: an infinity pool with a panorama on the harbour.

Harbour House Aruba offers cosmopolitan living in a beach-chic environment. The residence is fast-selling their studios, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units for many reasons but in a nutshell we can name: great location, great value for your money and great quality. To see exactly what still is available you may check the website which shows you a map with sold and open units. Updates on construction are also on forehand. When you live abroad stopping by to check upon your purchase is not that simple, yet with the monthly updates on their website, it is a lot easier.

Hottest condo in town

Aruba Today talked to one of the owners from New York: "This is going to be the hottest condo building on the island because this is the very first thing people see when they arrive here by cruise ship and it is the only one combining the ocean, port and city. We feel so happy to be the owner here, also, the organization is amazing. We are being accommodated in every way, the attention you get is extraordinary."

Boardwalk

Living here includes being part of Oranjestad and all its benefits. Around the Harbour House building a boardwalk is constructed allowing you to stroll along the waterfront and enjoy a drink on a terrace or dive into the art gallery, souvenir store or even have dinner facing the atmospheric harbour of Oranjestad.



The process of purchase is easy, whether you are abroad or on the island. Make an appointment through the website to visit the sales office when you are here. In that way you can actually see the unit, materials and amenities. If you are not on the island the website can help you out and the sales office is happy to send you all needed documentation for you to orientate. When agreed upon the unit you sign an agreement and move forward with the down payment which is \$ 50.000. At receipt of that amount the sales is closed and the price will not change. You know what you get and will not be surprised by price changes. The payment agreements after the deposit will be discussed and are flexible. Harbour House Aruba assist also in financing by banks.

For more information:
<https://harbourhousearuba.com>.


HARBOUR HOUSE
Aruba

Lingering demand for consumer credit in April 2021

ORANJESTAD — During its meeting of June 8, 2021 and after reviewing the most recent economic and monetary data, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Centrale Bank van Aruba (CBA) decided to keep the reserve requirement at 7.0 percent. The reserve requirement refers to the minimum amount of reserves that commercial banks must hold at the CBA and is equal to 7.0 percent of their liabilities with a maturity less than 2 years. The following information and analysis were considered in reaching this decision.

International reserves

International reserves (including revaluation differences of gold and foreign

exchange holdings), up to and including May 21, 2021, strengthened by Afl. 248.1 million compared to the end of December 2020. This expansion was primarily the result of the liquidity support provided to the government of Aruba from the Netherlands, as well as higher inflows related to tourism. Meanwhile, official reserves increased by Afl. 98.3 million. Consequently, the official and international reserves reached, respectively, Afl. 2,306.2 million and Afl. 2,604.7 million as of May 21, 2021. Accordingly, the level of reserves remained adequate when benchmarked against the current account payments and the IMF ARA metric.

Credit developments

In April 2021, total credit contracted by Afl. 44.2 million or 1.1 percent to Afl. 3,920.0 million, when compared to the end of 2020. This was driven by the categories 'loans to individuals' (-Afl. 25.1 million or -1.3 percent), 'business loans' (-Afl. 14.3 million or -0.9 percent), and 'other' (-Afl. 4.9 million or -0.9 percent). The category 'loans to individuals' was mostly influenced by a lower demand in consumer credit and to a lesser extent due to decreasing housing mortgages. Meanwhile, the component 'business loans' was for the most part negatively impacted by current account loans, commercial mortgages, and term loans equal to



or below two years, all of which showed a decrease.

Inflation

The CPI was 0.4 percent lower in April 2021, compared to the corresponding month a year earlier (Figure 2). This was mainly attributed to lower prices in the categories 'recreation and culture' and 'clothing and footwear'. The 12-month average inflation rate continued its downward trend reaching -2.3 percent in April 2021. When excluding energy

and food, the 12-month average core inflation rate stood at -1.0 percent in April 2021, down from 0.1 percent in December 2020.

Prudential liquidity

The prudential liquidity ratio of the commercial banks, which measures the amount of their liquid assets to their total net assets, remained at a comfortable level in April 2021 (36.6 percent), far above the minimum required prudential liquidity ratio of 15.0 percent. □



Figure 1: Developments in official and international reserves.

The Aronson's honored as distinguished visitors

EAGLE BEACH — Recently, Marouska Heyliger had the great pleasure to honor a Loyal and friendly visitors of Aruba as Distinguished Visitors at their home away from home.

The honorees were: **Robert & Rachel Aronson** resident of West Long Branch New Jersey **Rebecca & Charlie Aronson** resident of West Long Branch New Jersey

The symbolic honorary title is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba between 10-20-35 and more consecutive years.

Heyliger together with the members of Costa Linda Beach Resort Miriam Rodriguez, and Gloria Janga were present at this special occasion in which they thanked the Aronson's for their loyalty throughout these years and for choosing Aruba and Costa Linda as their vacation destination and as their home away from home

Top reason for returning provided by the honorees were: The staff at the Costa Linda makes you feel better than a guest; they make you feel like family. The weather & facilities are always perfect. The Aruban people are always pleasant and accommodating. The foods island wide are delicious & healthy. □

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They're not blown away by N.J.'s offshore wind power plans

By WAYNE PARRY

Associated Press

OCEAN CITY, N.J. (AP) —

New Jersey is moving aggressively to become the leader in the fast-growing offshore wind energy industry on the East Coast, but not everyone is blown away by those ambitious plans.

While the state's Democratic political leadership is solidly behind a rapid build-out of wind energy projects off the coast — it has set a goal of generating 100% of its energy from clean sources by 2050 — opposition is growing among citizens groups, and even some green energy-loving environmentalists are wary of the pace and scope of the plans.

The most commonly voiced objections include the unknown effect hundreds or even thousands of wind turbines might have on the ocean, fears of higher electric bills as costs are passed on to consumers, and a sense that the entire undertaking is being rushed through with little understanding of what the consequences might be.

Recreational and commercial fishermen have long felt left out of the planning for offshore wind, much of which will take place in prime fishing grounds.

Similar concerns have been voiced by offshore wind opponents in Massachusetts, France and South Korea, among other places. Adding to the unhappiness is a bill passed by the state Legislature and awaiting action by New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy that, aside from granting them a public hearing, would remove virtually all control from local communities over where and how the power lines come ashore.

"They're still learning about this, and we're the guinea pigs," said Rick Bertsch, who is active with a group of Ocean City residents opposed to three offshore wind projects already approved off their city.

Danish company Orsted said in a statement that it is "fully committed to growing the New Jersey offshore



This Oct. 1, 2020 photo shows windmills at a utility plant in Atlantic City N.J.

Associated Press

wind industry sustainably. Our teams have held multiple open houses and are committed to meeting with stakeholders in the community to educate them on the countless economic, environmental, and community benefits of offshore wind."The company said it is committed to protecting the marine environment, and already has altered the planned layout of its turbines in one project after input from fishing groups. Most environmentalists and some business groups strongly support offshore wind as a clean, renewable power source as the nation and the world try to transition away from burning fossil fuels.

They say the wind farms will generate power that would otherwise be generated by burning coal or natural gas, helping to address climate change — and that the rapid pace of development is crucial to addressing climate change before it becomes irreversible.

Many of the opponents, particularly in flood-prone Ocean City, say they believe climate change is real and that a warming planet and rising seas are threats that must be addressed.

And while many agree that

continuing to burn fossil fuels will only make things worse, some opponents wish New Jersey would proceed more slowly and deliberately, learning as it goes. Three projects capable of generating enough electricity to power 1.6 million homes have already been approved by state regulators — and many more are on the way. New Jersey plans to solicit additional projects every two years until 2028.

There will be about 285 turbines built for those three projects, the state says.

"Why push this through, trampling all over the rights and desires of the people, without fully hearing from all stakeholders, considering all the financial, ecological, socioeconomic consequences?" asked Suzanne Hornick, a leader of the Ocean City opposition. "It's going to be an industrial site out there."

She worries residential customers could pay much higher prices for electricity than they do now.

Orsted said the first New Jersey project would raise the average residential customer's bill by \$1.46 a month. The state says its second project would add another \$1.28 to residential

bills. Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind's project would add \$2.21 a month to residential bills.

The Block Island wind farm, one of two currently operating in the U.S., has had its growing pains, including a cable that was not buried deep enough in the sea bed, got loose and had to be reburied. Ratepayers are paying part of the cost through a surcharge.

Most of Ocean City's council opposes the offshore wind projects, even as officials in many other communities embrace the technology as an environmental and economic boon. Last week, 110 elected officials from around the state signed a letter supporting what they call "responsible" offshore wind development.

One common criticism is visual pollution, the idea that the turbines will be visible from the shoreline and ruin pristine ocean views. Developers say the turbines, projected to be about 10 to 20 miles (16 to 32 kilometers) offshore, will be visible on the horizon under clear weather conditions, but less so during foggy or hazy conditions.

A residents group called Go Green and Unseen

wants the turbines moved 35 miles (56 kilometers) offshore so they will be invisible from the shore.

And while many environmental groups support offshore wind, that support is not universal, nor unqualified. Clean Ocean Action, New Jersey's leading ocean advocacy group, says it supports offshore wind, but wants to see a demonstration project first, to study and learn from the results. "These first proposals off the Jersey Shore are massive and total over 1.16 million acres — about the size of Grand Canyon National Park, and a law is pending to block communities' concerns," said Cindy Zipf, the group's executive director.

"If we don't get this right, we may learn too late that the 'Great Offshore Wind Boom' of the 2020s accelerated the ecological collapse of this ocean realm, the billion-dollar economies it supports, and its ability to help buffer climate change," she said. "To assuage the sins of our fossil fuel past, we must take care not to act recklessly, threatening the very goose that lays the golden eggs — our vibrant, giving ocean."□

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 35 Box office

1 Sewer buy

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5 Montana movies

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10 Loads mother

11 Ryan and 39 School

Tatum near

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RAID REMOTE
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SEER MAKERS

Saturday's answer

7 Gumshoe 23 Eight

8 Swindles furlongs

9 Lead or 24 Recyclable

lithium item

12 Publicity 25 City car

acts 27 More

16 Gunpowder impudent

holders 29 Play part

21 Shake- 30 Flat fish

speare's 31 Mortise's

prince of mate

Tyre 32 Position

22 Buccaneer 36 Young fox

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10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19
20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32
33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41

7-19

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

7-19

CRYPTOQUOTE

DTTM GTWWRCNGYXNTC NO

IROX YO OXNWRJYXNCD YO

PIYGE GTKKAA, YCM IROX YO

UYZM XT OJAAQ YKXAZ.

— YCCA WTZZTL JNCMPAZDU

Saturday's Cryptoquote: CLEARLY, THEN, THE CITY IS NOT A CONCRETE JUNGLE. IT IS A HUMAN ZOO. — DESMOND MORRIS

Oregon wildfire forms 'fire clouds' that pose danger below

By GILLIAN FLACCUS

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) —

Smoke and heat from a massive wildfire in south-eastern Oregon are creating giant "fire clouds" over the blaze — dangerous columns of smoke and ash that can reach up to 6 miles (10 kilometers) in the sky and are visible from more than 100 miles (160 kilometers) away.

Authorities have put these clouds at the top of the list of the extreme fire behavior they are seeing on the Bootleg Fire, the largest wildfire burning in the U.S. The inferno grew Friday to about 75 square miles (194 square kilometers) larger than the size of New York City and was raging through a part of the U.S. West that is enduring a historic drought.

The fire was so dangerous late Thursday and into Friday that authorities pulled out crews. Meteorologists this week also spotted a bigger, more extreme form of fire clouds — ones that can create their own weather, including "fire tornadoes."

Extreme fire behavior, including the formation of more fire clouds, was expected to persist Friday and worsen into the weekend.

WHAT ARE 'FIRE CLOUDS?'

Pyrocumulus clouds — literally translated as "fire clouds" — look like giant, dirty-colored thunderheads that sit atop a massive column of smoke coming up from a wildfire. Often the top of the smoke column flattens out to take the shape of an anvil.

In Oregon, fire authorities say the clouds are forming between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. each day as the sun penetrates the smoke layer and heats the ground below, creating an updraft of hot air. On this fire, crews are seeing the biggest and most dangerous clouds over a section of wilderness that's made up mostly of dead trees, which burn instantly and with a lot of heat.



In this photo taken with a drone provided by the Bootleg Fire Incident Command, a pyrocumulus cloud, also known as a fire cloud, is seen over the Bootleg Fire in southern Oregon on Wednesday, July 14, 2021.

Associated Press

For four days in a row, the Bootleg Fire has generated multiple fire clouds that rise nearly 6 miles (10 kilometers) into the atmosphere and are "easily visible from 100 to 120 air miles away" (160 to 193 kilometers), authorities said Friday.

The conditions that create the clouds were expected to worsen over the weekend.

WHAT'S THE SCIENCE BEHIND THESE CLOUDS?

When air over the fire becomes super-heated, it rises in a large column. As the air with more moisture rises, it rushes up the smoke column into the atmosphere, and the moisture condenses into droplets. That's what creates the "fire clouds" that look much like the thunderheads seen before a big thunderstorm.

These clouds, however, hold more than just water. Ash and particles from the fire also get swept into them, giving them a dark gray, ominous look.

IS THERE SOMETHING EVEN MORE DANGEROUS THAN A 'FIRE CLOUD'?

Yes. When a pyrocumulus cloud forms over a fire, meteorologists begin to watch carefully for its big brother, the pyrocumulonimbus cloud.

NASA has called the latter the "fire-breathing dragon of clouds" because they are so hot and big that they create their own weather. In a worst-case scenario, fire crews on the ground could see one of the mon-

ster clouds spawn a "fire tornado," generate its own dry lightning and create dangerous hot winds below. They can also send particulate matter from the smoke column up to 10 miles (16 kilometers) above Earth's surface.

So far, most of the clouds on the Bootleg Fire have been the less-intense fire clouds, but the National Weather Service on Wednesday spotted a pyrocumulonimbus cloud forming on what it called "terrifying" satellite imagery.

"Please send positive thoughts and well wishes to the firefighters. ... It's a tough time for them right now," the weather service said in a tweet.

HOW DANGEROUS ARE THESE CLOUDS?

Both types of fire clouds pose serious risks for firefighters. Multiple pyrocumulus clouds have been spotted for four consecutive days, and one of them on the southern flank of the fire partially collapsed Thursday, causing dangerous winds and embers to fall on crews.

That prompted the emergency evacuation of all firefighters and dirt-moving equipment from that part of the fire line. Authorities say there have been no reported injuries.

"We're expecting those exact same conditions to develop today and even worsen into the weekend," fire spokeswoman Holly Krake said Friday. □

UNESCO chides Australia over Great Barrier Reef proposal



In this Dec. 2, 2017, file photo shows the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — The Chinese host of this year's meeting of the U.N. World Heritage Committee on Sunday defended the body's proposal to label the Great Barrier Reef as "in danger" against Australian government suspicion that China influenced the finding for political reasons. The committee, which is meeting both virtually and in the Chinese city of Fuzhou for the next two weeks, will consider the draft decision on Friday.

"Australia, as a member state of the World Heritage Committee, should ... attach importance to the opinions of the advisory bodies and earnestly fulfill the duty of World Heritage protection instead of making groundless accusations against other states," said Tian Xuejun, the Chinese vice minister of education and the president of this year's session.

The UNESCO committee will consider adding new sites to the World Heritage list, taking some off and adding others to the in-danger category. A draft decision to put Venice on the in-danger list prompted the Italian government to ban cruise ships from the lagoon city in a bid to avoid the designation.

Tian, speaking at the first news conference since the meetings opened last Friday, said the Great Barrier Reef proposal was based on data from Australia and

recommendations from an advisory body. Australia reacted angrily when the draft was released last month.

"This decision was flawed. Clearly there were politics behind it," Environment Minister Sussan Ley said, without mentioning China by name.

Relations between the two nations have soured in recent years, with Australia blocking Chinese technology and investment in key infrastructure, and China using tariffs and other measures to reduce its imports from Australia.

Australia was warned in 2014 that an in-danger listing was being considered for the Great Barrier Reef, which was designated a

world heritage site in 1981. The draft decision said that Australia's long-term plan for the reef, a network of 2,500 reefs covering 348,000 square kilometers (134,000 square miles), "requires stronger and clearer commitments, in particular towards urgently countering the effects of climate change."

"We acknowledge very much the work which has been done in Australia, but our text in the draft decision ... is a proposal for putting the site on the list of world heritage in danger because of the threats which were identified," said Mechtilde Roessler, the UNESCO director of the World Heritage Committee.



Ernesto Ottone Ramírez, the assistant director-general for culture at UNESCO, said that an in-danger listing should be viewed as a collective call for action from all the member states. "It's something that should be seen as something positive and not, as what we heard from some of the authorities in other countries, as a punishment," he said, joining the news conference from Paris. "It's how we preserve our heritage for future generations." □



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Name to know: 'Escape Room' franchise star Taylor Russell



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Taylor Russell and Logan Miller in a scene from "Escape Room: Tournament of Champions."

By **LINDSEY BAHR**
AP Film Writer

Movie lovers don't necessarily come to high concept horrors like "Escape Room" or its sequel "Tournament of Champions" for the acting.

Yet even with all the high stakes flash of these thrilling, set-piece and spectacle-driven puzzles-within-puzzles, star Taylor Russell's talent shines though as the traumatized but determined Zoey.

The 26-year-old is still a relative newcomer on the scene with a handful of

roles in projects like Netflix's "Lost in Space," indies like "Waves" and the "Escape Room" movies, the latest of which is out this weekend. But she's quickly establishing herself as one to watch. "She's incapable of hitting a false note," said "Escape Room" director Adam Robitel. "She's amazing. She's a star. I just hope she continues to flourish."

Russell was born in Vancouver and moved around a lot growing up. She didn't even start acting until she was 18.

"I really wanted to be a dancer but that just wasn't in the cards for me," she said in a recent interview. But the desire to perform seems to have been with her from the start. Her mom told her that she'd stay up into the early hours of the morning in her room talking to herself and doing characters.

"I think it's always been something that I loved," Russell said. "I loved watching movies and would try to recite everything they did in the mirror and repeat what they did. In that way I think I was always going to

do this. But I didn't come to that realization until I was 18."

Her family is full of creative people — writers, poets and artists — but no one had any meaningful ins to the show business world. So when she decided to go for it, she started from the bottom, auditioning in Canada, booking gigs here and there and saving up enough money to drive to Los Angeles for pilot season. Russell did "the young L.A. actor thing" of auditioning and sleeping on couches until the money ran out and she'd drive back north and start saving again. She did that for three years.

She even quit at one point, after turning down a gig she booked that she realized was "a bad deal." Russell retreated to her parents' house in Canada to work in a restaurant and figure out what she was going to do with her life. Then, on a random visit to L.A. to see a friend, she booked the audition that would end up being her big break: The Netflix revival of the 1965 series "Lost in Space."

Starring as the inquisitive and brave Judy Robinson in the sci-fi series, "kind of changed the game for me," she said. The third and final season is expected to hit the streamer later this year.

The platform also helped open up opportunities. Soon after booking "Lost in Space," she was cast to lead "Escape Room," which was conceived as a possible trilogy from the start.

Robitel knew he needed to find someone equal parts empathetic and intelligent. "I don't think you can act intelligence, frankly. You need to embody it," he said. "And she just came in and nailed it. It was just absolutely clear to me that she was Zoey."

Though the "Escape Room" films aren't quite Shakespeare, Robitel laughed, they are uniquely challenging in a different way for actors with the elaborate stunts and camera coverage required. Russell impressed him throughout. And it ended up being a success. The first film, released in early 2019,

grossed over \$155 million at the box office and a sequel was quickly put into motion, which would reunite Russell and with her co-star Logan Miller and add a host of new players, like Holland Roden and Indya Moore.

"I'm so glad people enjoyed the first one," Russell said. "I think this one is coming at a good time to enjoy in the theater and immerse yourself in this whole wild world."

Film critic Katie Walsh compared Russell's Zoey to Neve Campbell's Sidney from "Scream" as someone so compelling to watch that you almost don't want her to be free from the horrific plight.

"We're in a strange paradox as viewers: Do we even want to see her escape? That would deny the satisfaction of watching her work," Walsh wrote. "But it doesn't seem like it's coming to an end any time soon, so that will happily remain a quandary for another day."

Some of Russell's most fulfilling projects thus far have been the independent films, like "Waves," in which she played the younger sister to a high school sports star and addict.

"I wanted that film so bad," Russell said. "I dreamt about making films like that."

Time critic Stephanie Zacharek wrote that, "Russell's performance is like a rush of wind on a dry, hot day, the blessing you didn't know you needed."

Next up, she's starring opposite Timothée Chalamet in "Bones & All," a story about first love directed by Luca Guadagnino of "Call Me By Your Name."

And she's just grateful for the work, especially in a year where so many of her peers have found themselves languishing.

"I'm still a very young person in this world and I have so much more to learn, but what excites me right now is I look back on the things that I've done and they all feel so different, to me at least," she said. "I love working on independent films, I love working on bigger films. I love all of it." □

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Out for a ride: Tadej Pogacar wins 2nd straight Tour title

By **SAMUEL PETREQUIN**
AP Sports Writer

Tadej Pogacar took the yellow jersey to Paris to win his second straight Tour de France on Sunday after a grueling three-week odyssey that at times he made look like a recreational ride.

Pogacar's repeat success at cycling's biggest event was a tale of total dominance, prompting one question: At age 22, how many more Tours can the Slovenian win?

Pogacar won his first title last September when he became the Tour's youngest champion in 116 years. He is now the youngest double winner of the race. In sharp contrast to last year — when as a rookie he had to wait until the penultimate stage to seize the overall lead — Pogacar has been untouchable in this race.

His team was better equipped and better prepared, and Pogacar assumed the favorite's mantle with the ease of a seasoned veteran. His supremacy was such that, in addition to his overall win, he also claimed the King of the Mountains and best young rider jerseys.

The UAE Team Emirates leader successfully defended his huge lead of 5 minutes, 20 seconds over second-place Jonas Vingegaard in the mostly ceremonial final stage to the Champs-Elysees on Sunday. Richard Carapaz finished third overall, 7:03 off the pace.

Vingegaard and Carapaz were the only riders to finish within 10 minutes of the two-time champion.

"I did my best, maximum, like I always do, and that was enough," Pogacar said.

Wout van Aert won the 21st stage in a mass sprint. That prevented Mark Cavendish from beating Belgian great Eddy Merckx's record of 34 stage wins which the British sprinter equaled earlier in the race. The mostly flat 108-kilometer (67-mile) leg began in Chatou just outside Paris and concluded with eight

laps up and down the famed avenue.

Pogacar and his teammates rode together at the front of the pack as they reached the Champs-Elysees, and the Slovenia champion raised his fist in the air in celebration.

Pogacar's gesture acted as a signal for those fighting for a prestigious stage win as the first accelerations took place. But the attackers' efforts did not pay off and the stage ended in a mass sprint.

Cavendish, who consoled himself with the best sprinter's green jersey, banged his handlebar in frustration after van Aert edged Jasper Philipsen to the line. Cavendish was third.

Van Aert, a 26-year-old versatile Belgian with excep-

tional skills on all terrains, became the first competitor since 1979 to win a sprint, a mountain stage and an individual time trial in the same edition of the Tour.

As for Pogacar, the only crack in his armor came in the Mont Ventoux stage in the second week, when he was briefly dropped by Vingegaard during the second ascent of the iconic mountain. But Pogacar showed calm and composure that day to catch his rival and remained unscathed.

Apart from that scare, Pogacar's ride was flawless and merciless.

Following his stunning display in the first time trial, he was in a class of his own in the Alps and seized the



Slovenia's Tadej Pogacar, wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey, waves as he rides with his UAE Team Emirates teammates as they lead the pack during the twenty-first and last stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 108.4 kilometers (67.4 miles) with start in Chatou and finish on the Champs Elysees in Paris, France, Sunday, July 18, 2021.

Associated Press

race lead with a vintage long-distance attack in atrocious weather. He then wrapped up the demolition work in the Pyrenees with

two prestigious stage wins to become only the fourth rider in Tour history to win consecutive summit finishes at cycling's biggest race. □

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Flawless finish: Morikawa wins British Open for 2nd major

By **STEVE DOUGLAS**

AP Sports Writer

SANDWICH, England (AP)

— Collin Morikawa gazed adoringly at the claret jug, thrust it into the air and then gave it a kiss, a two-time major champion at age 24. This time there were people to cheer him.

The American closed with a bogey-free, 4-under 66 and won the British Open in his debut Sunday, becoming the first player to capture two different majors on the first attempt.

His victory 11 months ago on his PGA Championship debut came in the first major with no spectators amid the pandemic.

So it was a very different scenario for Morikawa, a mature-beyond-his-years Californian, as he made one of the greatest walks in golf down the 18th fairway at Royal St. George's, first to applause and then to a standing ovation.

After tapping in for par to win by two shots over Jordan Spieth, he gave a fist pump before applauding the spectators in the huge grandstand around the 18th green, part of a crowd of 32,000 people that made for the biggest gallery in golf since before the coronavirus pandemic. "I am obviously very biased being from the U.S., but I'm seeing some of the best crowds I have ever seen out here," Morikawa said in his victory speech on No. 18.



United States' Collin Morikawa celebrates on the 18th green after winning the British Open Golf Championship at Royal St George's golf course Sandwich, England, Sunday, July 18, 2021.

Associated Press

"Those are the moments, the few seconds that you embrace so much," he added. "You look around, every seat is packed, everywhere is packed with people."

Morikawa is halfway to the career Grand Slam after eight starts and the first player since Bobby Jones in 1926 to win two majors in so few appearances. He follows Gene Sarazen, Jones, Jack Nicklaus, Seve Ballesteros, Tiger Woods, Rory McIlroy and Spieth in winning multiple majors before turning 25.

His total of 15-under 265 was a 72-hole record in 15 British Opens at Royal St. George's.

"When you make history," he said, "it's hard to grasp, it's hard to really take it in. ... At 24 years old, it's so hard to look back at the two short years that I have been a pro and see what I've done because I want more."

He did it with style amid immaculate weather on the links off Sandwich Bay, flushing shots with his irons and getting up-and-down on the rare occasions he found trouble. He called his putting display one of the best of his short career, turning a statistical weakness into a strength.

Starting the final round one shot behind Louis Oosthuizen, Morikawa was tied for

the lead after four holes and then made three straight birdies on Nos. 7-9 to overtake the South African, who hadn't trailed since the 12th hole of his second round.

Morikawa made key par saves — pumping his fist both times — at Nos. 10 and 15, between which he rolled a birdie putt up and over a ridge and into the cup on the 14th to build a two-stroke lead he never lost. Spieth parred his final four holes and also shot 66. By making par at the last after another perfect drive, Morikawa played his final 31 holes without a bogey on a course that has confounded many great play-

ers because of its quirky bounces and undulating fairways.

All the more remarkable was that this was his first major test on a seaside links. Morikawa had little experience with this style of golf before playing the Scottish Open last week at The Renaissance Club, which is not a traditional links but featured the kind of tight lies and rolling terrain that prepared him for it. He even had three new irons in his bag this week. He completed a feat achieved by Ben Curtis on the same course in 2003, winning golf's oldest championship in his links debut.

For Oosthuizen, who was seeking a wire-to-wire win and a second claret jug — he had a runaway victory at St. Andrews in 2010 — it was another near miss in a career full of them. He was runner-up this year at the PGA Championship and the U.S. Open, two of his six second-place finishes at majors.

This time Oosthuizen tied for third with U.S. Open champion Jon Rahm (66) after closing with a 71 — his first round not in the 60s this week. He never recovered from losing his lead with an ugly bogey on the par-5 seventh hole. He caught way too much ball out of the greenside bunker with his third shot, which bounced onto the putting surface and landed in a bunker on the other side. □

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